

Workmentor

A report on the piloting phase of Workmentor workshops.

Theory and course materials developed and adapted by the use of many sources on mentoring – in the Project Workmentor 2011 - 2013.

Each partner hosted a piloting workshop to test the course materials.

The Workmentor project was a Transfer of Innovation project within the Leonardo da Vinci programme for Vocational Training.

Verkmenntaskólinn á Akureyri coordinating:
Gower College Swansea, Wales.
Riverside Training – Broadshoulders Hereford, England.
Axxell Utbildning Ekenäs, Finland.
Jules Rieffel (France Europea) Nantes, France.
IFSAT Harderwijk, Netherlands.
Skjetlein Resurssenter Trondheim, Norway

This report – summary is prepared by Tanja Halttunen from Axxell, the Finland partner in the Workmentor project. Tanja asked all the partners to send information about what they did when piloting the workmentor workshop. Because of different formats and different time of piloting it became a bit difficult to collect feedback from the participants.

1. Number of persons from workplaces taking part in the piloting process

	Started	Finished
Iceland	16	16
England	14	14
France	20	20
Norway	10	10
Finland	13	13
Wales	5	4

2. The format: workshops (dates) or / and individual sessions, how were these implemented? Place for workshops. Where, which kind of facilities?



The piloting was conducted by Iceland, England, France, Norway, Finland and Wales from September 2012 – September 2013. How the piloting was done varied from partner to partner, some did the piloting as workshops arranged at the school (France, Norway, England, Wales and Iceland) and Finland chose to do the piloting out in the workplacements. The piloting sessions were either 2-3 times 2 hours sessions, a 1 day

course, or a 3 day long course. The methods how to conduct the piloting was chosen by each partner so that it would cause least trouble to the employers and make the piloting as educating and useful as possible for all the participants.

Most of the workplaces that took part in the piloting were experienced in mentoring VET students, the exception were Iceland and Wales where some workplaces had no experience in mentoring students.

The sectors the piloting was done were:

- Social and health care and the technical sector (Iceland and Wales)
- Hospitality (England)
- Agriculture (France)
- Agriculture, Horses (Norway)
- Social and health care (Finland and Wales)

Unfortunately Netherlands was not able to do the piloting. The reason is that the restaurant IFSAT (Workmentor partner from the Netherlands) was working with became bankrupt - stopped. This restaurant, Het Idee, was training unemployed people for working in catering and in restaurants. They were going to do the piloting with their staff and the staff of some other cooperating companies to prepare them for supporting the students. Het Idee got money from social funds to be able to guide and train the unemployed people but suddenly the municipality did not fulfill it's financial promises. Het Idee needed to stop and the piloting could not be done.

At the time this is written we hope this program can survive and then the manual for the Workmentor training will be available since Maarten Reckman, founder of Het Idee took part in the training course in Nantes preparing for doing the piloting workshop.

3. Materials and methods used during the piloting

The materials being tested was the Mentoring manual that was developed during the WorkMentor project and presented to the participants of the Train the trainers meeting held in Nantes, France in August 2012. The partners were free to choose parts of the materials being tested in more depth.

VMA (Iceland) used the entire mentoring manual as well as a slideshow that they had made in order to present the manual. Prior to the piloting VMA sent an introductory letter to the workplaces where they presented the project and the mentoring manual. In the training they went through some of the exercises in the manual and discussed the exercises. They also used sheets to use with mentees (e.g. goal setting) and evaluation forms to be used by mentors when evaluating the teachers etc. After the piloting VMA conducted a survey for mentors about the piloting.

Riverside Training (England) concentrated on the mentoring conversation as did Axxell (Finland). Both Riverside Training and Axxell put a lot of time during the piloting to discuss the purpose of mentoring and what skills a good mentor should have. Riverside Training also focused on the importance of mentoring and what is an structured approach to mentoring. Axxell focused more on the importance of setting goals and constantly providing the student with constructive feedback and gave examples from the Mentoring Manual on how to give feedback to a student and what kind of questions to ask students in order to see their development and the weaknesses and strengths of the students. Both Riverside and Axxell also provided the workmentors/employers with information about empathy, listening and trust.

Jules Rieffel (France) focused during the piloting on helping the workplace mentors to understand their new role as a mentor. In order to do this they used the mentoring manual in order to provide the workplace mentors with information about what mentoring is and what their role as a mentor is. They used very little written materials (e.g. powerpoint presentations) just like Axxell did. Instead they wanted the training to be more interactive so that the workplace mentors could come with their opinions,

questions and feedback on the exercises done from the mentoring manual.

Skjetlein Resurscenter (Norway) held meetings with people from farms. These are the people who take the students of horse study from Skjetlein.

Gower College (Wales) précised the Mentoring Manual and created an introductory programme that gave the participants a flavor of what was included in the complete course. Each main topic – What is Mentoring, Core Skills required for Mentoring, Core Conditions for Mentoring and Implementation and Targets.

4. Summary of the feedback from the piloting - the trainers' point of view.

The workplace mentors that took part in the piloting where all happy with the piloting sessions. They felt that the manual was useful and helpful especially if you a new inexperienced workplace mentor. According to the feedback received from the workplace mentors the mentoring manual helps the workmentors to *become better equipped in their role* as a mentor and helped them *understand the meaning of being a mentor*.

The feedback the teachers got was that the workmentors wanted the school to cooperate closer with the workmentors and support them in the mentoring process. The workmentors that took part in the training liked to receive more training similar to the trainings conducted during the piloting of Workmentor as this kind of interactive training gives them an opportunity to discuss with the teachers and/or other workmentors what mentoring of VET students is and how to improve the mentoring skills. The workmentors from Finland pointed out that they really appreciated the part in the manual where there were suggestions on questions that can be used in order to make students reflect and put into words what they have learned as these questions and reflections could be used in order to evaluate the progress of the students.

The participants are aware that it is important for a student to have a mentor but some of the participants said there are many staff members that are afraid of being a mentor as being a mentor puts a lot of extra pressure on them (e.g. they need the skills to be a good mentor, it is a lot of work). A key thing in being a workmentor is to understand the role they have in teaching and mentoring the students to learn about their profession. In some cases they think the students come to show what they have learned at school instead of coming there to learn and develop professional skills with the support and feedback of the mentor.

Some things that could be developed with the mentoring manual:

- There should be an overview of the mentoring process
- Information about how to best pair a student with a workplace mentor
- There is a need to differentiate between the qualities of a mentor and the skills of a mentor. Qualities of a mentor (accrding to the outcomes of the

piloting conducted by Riverside Training) are: empathy, trustworthy, respectful and confidentiality. Skills of a mentor are: listening, questioning, paraphrasing, giving feedback, problem solving and action planning.

The surprises of the piloting was:

- This created a lot of good discussion from staff who thought they were good at mentoring - we all have something we can learn from this.
- The role of the mentor.

A few comments:

- The course material is good.
- Make a small book with some information for the Mentors maybe, something they can bring with them in their pocket and look at.
- I prefer to discuss the material in a meeting with others or just with one from Skjetlein at my farm - where we may see things at the workplace.
- It was positive to meet others and I believe that there should be a meeting for the whole group of companies also in the future.

5. Summary of the feedback from the piloting - the trainers' point of view.

The teachers conducting the piloting were pleased with the reception the mentoring manual had. They felt the workplace mentors appreciated the opportunity to discuss mentoring together with the teachers and there was a big need for the workshops/mentoring sessions.

The feedback from the teachers doing the piloting was that it is important to reserve enough time for the sessions, it is not enough to reserve 1 hours for it and the 2 hour sessions were also considered a bit short as there was not enough time reserved to do the different exercises in the manual.

The piloting of the mentoring manual also gave the teachers the opportunity to discuss the mentoring process and the skills of mentors together with the workplace mentors in order to find a common understanding of the roles and tasks of a mentor.



Piloting workshop in VMA, Akureyri, Iceland.

6. Which are the main things you learned during the training?

Here are a few comments on what the workplace mentors felt that they learned during the training:

- how to listen, how to question and the difference between empathy and sympathy
- setting goals and targets to welcome the apprentice in the company
- skills of mentoring
- to be a mentor
- bond between the mentor and the apprentice
- how to communicate with him (the mentee)
- communication between the apprentice and coworkers
- opening questions
- to be available with the apprentice
- to question yourself
- to understand the things when it works bad
- to share knowledge and experience
- to notice (better watching)
- share experience and knowledge
- to challenge yourself
- how to be with the apprentice (qualities of a mentor)
- to be a mentor not only a boss
- a possibility to get closer connection between workplace and school (and student)
- that my company is appropriate for the workplace training of students
- that my company might be a vocational training workplace if I wish to
- that there is a supportive network for small companies in this field and we might cooperate together with

7. What would you like to change about the training?

Below are a few comments about what the workplace mentors would like to change about the training:

- follow up meeting
- to have it sooner in order to anticipate a better relationship with the apprentice
- one day about the skills of the mentor is enough
- To get more people to attend!
- I would like to have a meeting at my farm (and Ingvild agreed to come and meet me later on, and she came in May, and completed the training)

Conclusion

The final conclusion is that the piloting has supported what was the major conclusion of the inventory of needs. There is a need for a course for workmentors and the manual prepared for the workshops seems to cover most of the necessary topics. The time needed for the training is always limited. The people from workplaces can not spend a lot of time in a workshop like this but it is important not to speed the discussion too much. The format of two or three sessions 2 – 3 hours each session is likely to be of some benefit to the participants, the future workmentors. It seems that we do not need to change the manual a lot. With time the manuals and the workshops will adapt to each country but the basic skills and qualities of mentors will hold. The piloting phase of the Workmentor Project has proved to us that this we did a good work and mentoring in the workplace will improve vocational education and training systems.

Report prepared by Tanja Halttunen at Axxell as a part of the work package Piloting.